

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 06044 031755Z
ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6931
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 6044

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, CSCE, SHUM, UR, US
SUBJ: MUKACHEVO CEMETERY

REF: (A) MOSCOW 4494, (B) MOSCOW 4039, (C) MOSCOW 2307

1. AFTER WEEKS OF FRUITLESS EFFORTS, EMBOFF REACHED SHCHER-
BAKOV OF STATE COMMITTEE FOR RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS ON MAY 3 AND
INQUIRED RE STATUS OF MUKACHEVO CEMETERY. SHCHERBAKOV
STATED MATTER IS STILL UP IN AIR AND NO DECISIONS HAVE BEEN
TAKEN. HOWEVER, HE ADDED THAT "INTERNAL LOCAL FORCES" IN
MUKACHEVO WERE STILL PRESSING FOR "FINAL RESOLUTION
(OKONCHATEL'NOYE RESHENIYE) OF CEMETERY PROBLEM; THAT IS,
FOR A DECISION NOT IN OUR INTERESTS." HE EXPRESSED HOPE THAT
THE STATE COMMITTEE'S EFFORTS WOULD PREVAIL OVER THESE
"INTERNAL LOCAL FORCES" AND ACHIEVE A RESULT REFLECTING
"OUR" INTERESTS. SHCHERBAKOV SAID HE PLANNED TO CALL MUKA-
CHEVO "AGAIN" AROUND MAY 7 TO CHECK ON SITUATION THERE AND
WOULD INFORM EMBASSY OF ANY NEW DEVELOPMENTS.

2. COMMENT: SHCHERBAKOV (AS WELL AS HIS BOSS TITOV)
HAS ALL ALONG PORTRAYED STATE COMMITTEE AS TRYING TO
BE HELPFUL IN OBTAINING FAVORABLE DECISION RE MUKACHEVO
(REF B AND C). HOWEVER, HIS REFERENCE TO "FORCES"
IN MUKACHEVO WHICH HE IMPLIED ARE PERSISTENTLY SEEKING
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TO ABOLISH CEMETERY, IS A FOREBODING NEW NOTE. BOTH
SHCHERBAKOV AND TITOV TOOK A WHOLLY OPTIMISTIC, UPBEAT
LINE DURING VISIT OF RABBI SCHNEIER'S GROUP LAST FEB-
RUARY AND DID NOT AT THAT TIME PORTRAY LOCAL OFFICIALS
EITHER AS SINGLEMINDEDLY BENT ON ABOLISHING CEMETERY OR
AS CAPABLE OF HAVING THEIR WAY. IN FACT, DURING
SCHNEIER VISIT, SHCHERBAKOV MADE A POINT OF SAYING THAT

REGARDLESS OF FACT THAT LOCAL OFFICIALS HAVE LEGAL CONTROL OF CEMETERY, THEY WERE RESPONSIVE TO WISHES FROM THE CENTER AND THAT THE REAL DECISION WOULD BE TAKEN IN MOSCOW. IT MAY BE THAT BEHIND THE CORDIALITY AND COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE SHOWN BY THE STATE COMMITTEE ON THE MUKACHEVO ISSUE THERE IS AN ELEMENT OF DISSIMULATION.

3. THE APPROACHING JUNE CONFERENCE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS (REF B) IN MOSCOW MAY ACT AS A RESTRAINT ON ANY PRECIPITOUS SOVIET ACTION RE MUKACHEVO. THE CONFERENCE ITSELF MAY OFFER AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE AMERICAN JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS INCLUDING THE MUKACHEVO ASSOCIATION TO LOBBY ON BEHALF OF THE CEMETERY. IN THIS CONNECTION, EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE BEING INFORMED WHETHER U.S. CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH GROUPS ARE PLANNING TO SEND DELEGATIONS TO CONFERENCE. ANOTHER LOBBYING OPPORTUNITY MAY BE DURING TITOV VISIT TO U.S. (REF A), PROVIDED IT MATERIALIZES BEFORE SOVIETS DECIDE FATE OF CEMETARY. TOON

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